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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000147

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SUBJECT: (C) KRG MINISTER FOR PESHMERGA AFFAIRS ON MERGER, SECURITY,
FOREIGN INFLUENCES

REF: KIRKUK 00000134; KIRKUK 00000136

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jim Bigus, PRT Leader, POL, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Minister for Peshmerga Affairs, Omar Osman Ibrahim, said on August 7 the KDP and PUK were ready to merge their Peshmerga forces within six months (Septel.). Ibrahim said Peshmerga were located below the 'Green Line' anywhere KDP or PUK offices were based. No independent Peshmerga action would be taken against the PKK unless they directly attacked Peshmerga or Baghdad commanded such action. Ibrahim suggested dividing Kirkuk into territories with each falling under the control of police embedded with intelligence officers. Iraqi Army (IA) protected the KRG border areas so any cross-border attack from Turkey or Iran would encounter federal forces first. However, local Kurds, probably former Peshmerga, supplied the bulk of these forces. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(C) KDP, PUK READY TO MERGE PESHMERGA

2. (C) KRG Minister for Peshmerga Affairs, Omar Osman Ibrahim, told IPAO on August 7 that both of the two main Kurdish parties were ready to merge their Peshmerga forces and that these would be unified within six months (Septel.). He said that the merger of the two KRG Erbil and Sulaymaniyah administrations last March had changed the agenda of Peshmerga leaders, with defense of the Kurdistan region, as well as Kurdish and Iraqi unity, being the driving factors. Ibrahim said the sectarian divisions in the rest of Iraq were only making the two Peshmerga forces more determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past. (Note: Between 1994 and 1996, a civil war broke out between KDP and PUK Peshmerga forces. End note.) Ibrahim claimed formal commissions had been formed to merge the two forces but had not met to date, and declined to supply specific statistics on Peshmerga numbers because he "had not revealed these to the PUK leaders yet" (Ref. Para. 10). He said the goal of the Peshmerga Ministry was to match the pay scales, ranking system, and order of the federal government security forces.

(C) PESHMERGA PRESENT BELOW THE 'GREEN LINE'

3. (C) Ibrahim said Peshmerga forces were protecting oil pipelines and roads into Mosul and Kirkuk. In some cases, he claimed, such as in Tel Afar, Peshmerga have been merged with IA

but remain partially controlled by the KRG. He said that, in the mixed Kurdish areas currently outside KRG administrative boundaries, "any place with a KDP or PUK office received Peshmerga protection" (Ref. Para. 8-10). (Note: Ibrahim kept referring to the IA as "New Iraqi Army" which had formerly been "Iraqi National Guard" forces. Post is working to obtain the exact number and locations of all KDP and PUK offices in areas outside the KRG boundaries. End note.)

(C) NO PESHMERGA ACTION AGAINST PKK WITHOUT BAGHDAD ORDER

14. (C) Ibrahim claimed the KRG considered the Peshmerga an integral part of Iraq's security forces and would only take action against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK, formerly Kongra Gel/KGK) independently if the PKK attacked Kurdish forces directly or if Baghdad ordered the Peshmerga to take action against the PKK. Ibrahim said normal Kurds did not like the PKK and would support action against this group within the Iraqi Kurdish region. He cautioned, however, that the PKK also had bases and offices in Iran, and that simply chasing PKK members currently located in Iraq out of KRG areas would only multiply the threat by creating new camps and branch organizations. He claimed Turkey and Iran were coordinating their attacks against alleged PKK camps in the KRG areas in an attempt to intimidate the Kurds of Iraq, and added the courts had already closed a PKK-affiliated office in Erbil and that this was under investigation. (Note: The office operated under the control of the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party, an alleged PKK front party (Ref. Kirkuk 00000134). Turkish government officials in Baghdad and Ankara, however, claim that none of the PKK front party offices in Iraq have been closed. Post is still trying to clarify this matter. End note.)

(C) SOLVING THE "KIRKUK PROBLEM"

15. (C) Ibrahim proposed three solutions to the deteriorating security in Kirkuk. He said Kirkuk should follow the Erbil

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model by building a security trench around the city. (Note: The KDP Asayish head also recommended this solution to Post on July 25, 2006. (Ref. Kirkuk 00000136.) End note.) Second, he claimed Kirkuk should be divided into territories with each part falling under the control of police with embedded intelligence officers. These forces should be posted along all access roads into the city to stop and interrogate people routinely. Currently, he said, security forces only performed random spot checks. Ibrahim said Peshmerga security check-points along Mosul, Kirkuk, and Salah ad-Din roads had been very successful in using this method. Finally, he claimed imposing curfews was critical to improving security.

(C) CURRENT ROLE OF FEDERAL FORCES IN KRG AREAS

16. (C) Ibrahim said currently IA patrolled border areas and gates in the Kurdistan region, and received regular supplies from the central government. He claimed Peshmerga leaders supported the presence of federal forces in the border areas, since a cross-border attack from Turkey or Iran would be interpreted by the international community and Coalition forces as a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. Ibrahim said that, as with the Shia in Basra or Sunnis in other regions of Iraq, the local population, in this case Kurds mostly, supplied the bulk of IA staffing in these border areas and "coordinated with the Peshmerga if requested."

(C) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES

17. (C) Omar Osman Ibrahim (aka Kak Zaim Ali): Current KRG Minister of Peshmerga Affairs; from Erbil; joined the Peshmerga in 1979 and went on to become a Kurdish war hero; elected to the KDP Central Committee and Politburo in 1989; currently serves as

the Politburo's Chief of Military Affairs.

(C) NOTES ON SPECIFIC PESHMERGA LOCATIONS BEYOND KRG BORDER

¶18. (C) Based on Ibrahim's comment regarding Peshmerga protection for KDP and PUK offices, post estimates Peshmerga would be located in several office centers for each party currently located outside KRG boundaries. Post is working to obtain specific information on current locations for PUK offices outside the KRG.

¶19. (C) Post received information that the KDP had central offices ("Branches") in the following locations outside current KRG boundaries: Mosul, 14th Branch, Office Head: Khasru Abdullah Goran; Khanaqin-Diyala, 15th Branch, Office Head: Salahaddin Ibrahim; Shaykhan-Mosul, 20th Branch, Office Head: Fariq Fayaq; Kirkuk, 3rd Branch, Office Head: Najat Hassan; Baghdad, 5th Branch, Office Head: Mohammed Amin Dalo.

(U) COMMENT

¶10. (C) Ibrahim's reticence to supply any specifics on Peshmerga numbers or logistics because his office had not yet told the PUK indicates communication between the parties and real desire to merge the two Peshmerga administrations is still not what KDP and PUK ministry leaders claim, most notably on security issues, and that distrust still remains between the two parties which needs to be overcome before any real progress on the merger can be made. Ibrahim's thinly disguised reference to IA coordinating "if requested" with the Peshmerga probably indicates who really controls the mostly Kurdish forces along the KRG's borders, namely the Peshmerga leaders.

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